

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

## Nut Tree train to ride again

Nut Tree train to ride again

By Melissa Murphy/ [MMurphy@TheReporter.com](mailto:MMurphy@TheReporter.com)

Posted: 04/29/2009



The train tracks at the Nut Tree Family Park won't look like they're in a ghost town much longer. (Rick Roach / The Reporter)

Nut Tree's No. 5 train will once again ride the tracks -- just one element that will be added to a new proposal for the village component of the development.

Tenants at the Nut Tree Village, the restaurant and retail portion of the development that sits at the entrance to the closed Family Park, have not been immune to the drastic change in the economy.

In the 27-month period that the Family Park was opened, it lost \$3 million -- a reason the park was closed indefinitely in January.

Tuesday, the Vacaville City Council was able to weigh in on future plans for the park and the village. Westrust, the developer responsible for the retail portion of the development, will most likely close a deal in May that will shift the responsibility of the Village project to Westrust as they continue to work

with the city on how to attract people to the Nut Tree Village.

Rick Capretta, co-managing partner of Westrust, has plans to bring some of those popular and historic elements from the Family Park to the front of the Nut Tree Village, which he believes will create visibility, foot traffic and overall excitement to the area.

The train is just one part of that big picture.

In phase one, the train will circle the oval shaped median of the village.

Capretta explained that relocation of the train as well as the carousel to the front area will help generate momentum for the businesses who have suffered since the Family Park's closure.

The council seemed excited about the project, but has some reservations about moving key pieces from the park to the front while leaving elements such as the historic Harbison House behind.

"I'm excited about the project, but I don't want to neglect the back part of the Family Park," said Councilman Ron Rowlett.

Vice Mayor Curtis Hunt agreed.

"I'm very excited about this, it has a lot of potential," he said. "I don't want to exchange one problem for another. There is a need to bring those two properties together."

Capretta reassured the council that they've already begun looking at how to extend the train to the back of the park to connect it with the Harbison House and the surrounding area that will be attended to during Phase II of the overall plan.

Tenants and former Nut Tree employees are excited about the prospective changes.

"They (Westrust) has worked so hard to see that we're successful," said Carlos Villasenor, owner of Villa Corona, a Mexican food restaurant in the village. "It's still been a little bit of a struggle, but I see a lot of potential."